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PSALM CXXII. Ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.

Preached at the

Parish Church of St. MARGARET, WESTMINSTER,

On Thursday, May 5, 1763, being the Day appointed for the

GENERAL THANKSGIVING for PEACE.

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L O N D O N,

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PSALM CXXII. 6, 7, 8, 9.

PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM, THEY SHALL
PROSPER THAT LOVE THEE.

PEACE BE WITHIN THY WALLS, AND PROSPERITY
WITHIN THY PALACES.

FOR MY BRETHREN AND COMPANIONS SAKES, I WILL
NOW SAY, PEACE BE WITHIN THEE.

BECAUSE OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD OUR GOD,
I WILL SEEK THY GOOD.

THIS Psalm appears to me, after the most calm
consideration and best enquiry I have been able
to make, to have been composed by *David*, after
the end of his many dangerous and distressful, although
prosperous wars; composed as a hymn of thanksgiving to
God, for the happy conclusion of them: and the conse-
quent enjoyment of the blessings of peace, in which he
and his people were now established, in perfect unanimity
and mutual satisfaction; insomuch that the motion of a
solemn thanksgiving to God, for so great a felicity, seem-
eth to have arisen from them.

Nor did their sovereign, although a hero, eminently
successful in war, in any degree discourage their desire;
quite otherwise, he rejoiced, and readily joined in it. *I
was glad (saith he) when they said unto me, Let us go in-
to the house of the Lord.*---He was delighted to hear them
exhort him to go up to the temple, at the head of his
people, to the holy purpose of a public and solemn thank-
giving

giving to God, for the great blessing of peace bestowed upon himself and his realm.

And it seemeth to me, from the natural connection of the sentences, that when his people moved for a thanksgiving, he quickly complied, and eagerly answered---*Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*--- He could make no delay to return from his camp to his capital, transported to find the city unanimous in wishes for the public tranquility, and in gratitude to God for it; as it was very natural they should, when they considered that it was the center of social union among the tribes, of religious union in the worship of God, and the established residence of the several thrones of the house of *David*: --- the tabernacle --- the throne of the ark, which contained the two tables of stone --- the testimony of God's covenant with his people --- the throne of the high-priest --- the thrones of judgment and justice --- the sanhedrim --- and the regal throne; as appears from the 4th and 5th verses of this Psalm.

This is the obvious sense of the Psalm, although it could not be so fully cleared in a bare translation; for we find, that on the king's mention of *Jerusalem*, he immediately addeth, *Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord; for there are set the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.*

He then breaks out into a rapture of zeal for the well-being of that city, on which the felicity and honour of the whole nation so greatly depended; *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee: peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren*

brethren and companions sakes I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.

Here it is observable, that the peace and happiness of the king, and his courts, are considered in this hymn as the natural consequence of the peace of the city: *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.* And so indeed it always should be.

A good king will always expect this as the natural consequence of his care and attention to the happiness of his people; and a dutiful people will always think it their indispensable duty to such a king, and likewise their truest interest to promote that prosperity, by all the proofs of honour, obedience, and respect in their power. --- Would to God, these proofs were now as effectually given to the most virtuous and respectable prince upon this throne, or any other we know of, in this world, as they are demonstrably due.

My christian hearers, this Psalm containeth the precepts and exhortations of a wise prince to his people (a prince who was also an inspired prophet), in order to influence and direct them to the several duties they owe to their king and country, at all times, but more particularly upon the return of peace; shewing the advantages of studying and praying for the general well-being; setting the example, and urging the motives to this important practice. And one would think, that wherever all these reasons of joy and unanimity met together, the effect should be the same: but it unhappily falleth out otherwise, at this time, and in this city, to the great grief of many good men.

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My purpose in this discourse shall be, to consider these several heads, in their order, in the best manner I can.

To begin then :

I. The first duty we owe to our country, at all times, is to pray to God for it.

Whoever believeth that God governeth the world, and that the issues and events of all things in heaven and earth are in his hands, and under his absolute direction (and he must be monstrously stupid that doth not firmly believe this), must find, humble supplication to him, and dependence upon him, for support, guidance, and protection, to be the wisest practice and most important duty of all reasonable creatures.

To be sure that we are under the government and protection of such a Being, the wisest, the best, the most powerful, the *all-wise*, and the *almighty*, and that he *careth for us*, and will, on all occasions, *bear our cry, and will help us*, help us in the best season, and in the kindest, most useful, and most effectual manner --- this, my brethren, is the highest consolation of the highest angel in heaven! --- And this consolation the Scripture hath fully ensured to the meanest man upon earth, in common with the highest angel.---And shall we not most thankfully accept, enjoy, and rejoice in it? Doth humble supplication to God put the highest of all earthly blessings in our power, and shall we not humbly and earnestly sue and supplicate for it? And when we have obtained it, shall we not accept it with joy, and embrace it with deep and cordial gratitude to our great benefactor?

Is peace the greatest of all earthly blessings? most certainly it is --- all nature rejoices in it --- (it is serenity and sunshine in the seasons, it is health in the body, and content and equanimity in the mind); it is the greatest of all earthly (most certainly not the least of all heavenly) blessings: and shall it be accepted with cold indifference, or, what is yet more amazingly shocking, with black ingratitude? and why --- because it hath not come up to all the purposes of the highest ambition, avarice, luxury, vanity, and interest in every class, society, division, and subdivision of men in the community!

I beseech you, brethren, calmly reflect for one moment, whether any, and which, which of all the blessings of Providence, the blessings of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, fully answereth all these purposes! --- what one of them all fully gratifieth, or can gratify all those various, and often inconsistent and contrary purposes: I freely own my ignorance --- indeed I know not, neither can I imagine: I dare not pronounce upon the capacity of others. --- If there be any who deem so amazingly of their own abilities, as to think they can! --- Yet I cannot help putting the question --- do reasonable men really expect that from mortal ignorance and infirmity, which Omnipotence and Omniscience could never yet effect? and have they reason to repine, and be not only discontented, but loudly querulous and abusive, when it is not effected? Indeed the spirit of abuse that is now gone abroad into the world, is become shocking, shameless, and infernal beyond example.

In the name of God, what can these venders of calumny, revilers of virtue, and despisers of government, mean, *who are not ashamed nor afraid to speak evil of*
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dignities?

dignities? dignities respectable beyond all others, that we know of.

To flatter the infirmities of princes, and pay court to their corruptions, is the sure way to vilify and debase a nation; but to unadorn their virtues, and, what is infinitely worse, to deform and disgrace them, is yet a surer way to bring that nation to intestine contention, between those that honour and those that abuse them, and of consequence to drive both into inevitable ruin.

Should a prince be found remarkably steady to every purpose that he thinketh just and virtuous, and should that steadiness be interpreted into obstinacy; should he think it his indispensable duty to recommend œconomy, and to set the example, to a nation over-run with debt, and that virtue be immediately disparaged and debased into the contrary extreme; what can more surely indicate corruption in a people, or induce destruction? must not this naturally tempt to all the extremes of luxury and profusion; and would not this treatment, to a prince of less steady virtue, be the wisdom of driving a wild boar into the vineyard, to waste and tear it up by the roots?

What can possibly be conceived more injurious, or more shocking, than to have his virtues not only deformed, but inverted? or what can be conceived more just or certain prognostics of ruin to that nation, unless it were to find the abandoned and blasphemous revilers of his virtues, and every thing *sacred* and serious, encouraged and applauded? and all this under pretence of protecting liberty; protecting it in men, who use their liberty only *for a cloak of maliciousness*, if that can properly be called a cloak, which is put on, not to hide, but to display; liberty abused in-

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to the most abandoned licentiousness, and practised, not to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates, but quite the reverse, to disobey, to disregard, and insult all authority, and to be ready for every evil work.

The ideas of such a conduct in a people are too dreadful to be pursued, and therefore I shall add no more upon this head, but that such a conduct must of necessity be always infamous, and finally ruinous to any nation.

But to proceed.--- *David*, though a hero and a conqueror, as I before observed, telleth us himself, that he had long laboured for peace, and had long lost his labour, *his soul had long dwelt among them that were enemies unto peace*; but in the end he received full assurance from God, that his petition was accepted, and should be accomplished, *Psalms xxix. 11. The Lord will give strength unto his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace.*

My brethren, I beseech you lend me your attention for one moment; do you not clearly see, from these words, that *David's* prayer to God was not to strengthen his people for unlimited contention and conquest, but to enable them to humble their enemies into a reasonable accommodation; *The Lord will give strength unto his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace.* And as he shewed his people the example in his own person, he exhorted them to the practice, and assured them of the reward. *O pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.*

All societies are made up of individuals; and it is almost self-evident, that those individuals who best consult the honour and interest of their country, by gentleness and civility, with candour and honesty in their dealings,
best

best consult their own.---And God seldom punisheth the evil devices and intentions of bad men more effectually, or severely, in this world, than by leaving them to the delusions of their own wicked desires, which hide from them the true interest of honesty and a peaceable demeanor.---*David*, we see, was in a way of thinking favourable to peace: nor was he single in this judgment; *St. Peter* thought so too, as appeareth from the third chapter of his First Epistle, ver. 10, 11, 12, and 13. *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.--- And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*

Here we see, that the blessing and protection of Almighty God is ensured to the righteous and peaceable man; together with all the other advantages of his integrity and pacific disposition.

I come now to consider the main motives that influenced *David* to the eager desire of peace --- and these were three ---

I. The public good, that is, the good of the people, the prince, and the state.

Which I consider but as one head, because they are, in truth, inseparable: *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.*

II. The good of his brethren: *For my brethren and companions sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.*

And

And, III. The good of religion : *Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.*

The first of these heads I have considered already, as I apprehend, sufficiently, although briefly ; because their true interest is, clearly and obviously, to the meanest capacity, one and the same.

David's next great motive to wish for peace, was the good of his brethren.

Small as *David's* dominion was, some parts of it bordered upon his heathen neighbours, and could not fail to be infested by them, during the continuance of war ; and therefore he addeth, *for my brethren and companions sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.* And forasmuch as our condition is in similar circumstances with regard to our colonies, therefore we also should rejoice in peace, for our brethren and companions sakes.

Whether our peace be or be not such as it should be, is not the business of private individuals to determine ; ours is only to acquiesce in what the Ruler of the world, and the ruler of the realm, whose prerogative it is, have determined for us.

As to the first ; should our best friend bestow a jewel of inestimable value upon us, would it become us to spurn it, because, if he pleased, he might have made it more valuable, or because we did not like the messenger that brought it.

For shame ! would not such a conduct be deemed silly and childish, mere infant peevishness, in the estimation of common sense.

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My brethren, I beseech you, let me not be misapprehended ; this is not a question of politics or refinement ; it is a question of common sense.

As to the ruler of the realm, can any one imagine that the proposals of peace, and the terms of concluding it, were not laid by him before his council, to be considered calmly, seriously, and repeatedly ; and could he ask the advice of wiser men, of men more considerate, more considerable, or more experienced in business ; and if they advised it on their own terms (as it is well known they did, and not only thoroughly approved, but highly applauded it), was it then to be expected that a youthful unexperienced prince (however just and clear in his understanding) should obstinately fix his judgment at variance with such advisers, as *Rehoboam* did ; would that be a proof of his wisdom, or was not his being so adviseable incomparably a better proof of it ? --- Had he acted by himself, he had reason to dread the first part of that wise maxim of *Solomon*, in the eleventh chapter of his *Proverbs*, at the 14th verse, *Where no counsel is, the people fall* ; but acting as he did, he had reason to confide in the second part of it, *but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety*. And what more could be expected from the best prince that ever lived, than to be attentive to his people's welfare by his counsels, and to draw down the blessing of God upon them by his piety.

But had the war been continued one year more, we had then been happy, and the enemy humbled to our highest wish.

Who told you, or could tell you so ? --- are we of the cabinet of Heaven ? --- are the issues and events of things

in our hands? --- Suppose the probability of success strongly on our side, doth success always answer and conform itself to probabilities? --- or if it did, are men always happy in the accomplishment of their wishes? --- how many have been undone by too much success! --- was not that once the case of your own ancestors, in their wars with *France*? --- were they not upon the verge of being ruined, and made a province by their victories?

Or view the question in another light --- is it wise to drive a mortified enemy to desperation; or is it wise to pursue the gratification of our desires to satiety? --- will this ensure the blessing of God to us? --- hath this been the conduct of all wise nations, at all times? --- and hath it been always followed with success? --- or hath moderation been, more eminently, the maxim of the wisest nations? --- is it not still the maxim of the much wiser Scriptures? --- and have not many more been ruined than benefited by acting against it?

My christian hearers, there is another question --- a leading question of great importance, to be well considered on this occasion; --- do we want more wealth, or more dominion? --- God grant we have not already too much of both---This I am sure of, and all the world will allow, that if we may judge by the wastes of vanity, and unlimited luxury of some of the present loudest enemies to peace; no man, that loves virtue or his country, will think it his duty to wish them more.

Oeconomy hath hitherto been considered, in all other countries, as a virtue of great importance to the public, especially when oppressed with debt, and ever accounted a sure mark of solid wisdom and virtue in the prince

prince to set the example --- is it not here the great object of ridicule and reproach? --- I beseech you, brethren, what can all this indicate --- poverty or profusion? --- wisdom or folly? --- virtue or vice? --- I dare not take upon me to pronounce further than this; that (to the grief of every good subject) *London* is not now in the state in which *Jerusalem* was, when *mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other.*

In the name of religion and virtue, be prevailed upon to suspend the dictates of faction, of enmity, ambition, and avarice, for a small space; and listen only to the voice of reason and virtue! Have we forgot our Saviour's answer on occasion of the complaint made against the avaricious brother, who would not consent to divide the inheritance?

Christ, indeed, refused to be an arbitrator at that time, because such a conduct suited not his then character of the Messiah; but suppose the same question put to him now, in the character of the Supreme Ruler, by two brother monarchs, about the inheritance God had bestowed upon each; think we not that his answer might now be nearly the same that it was then to the contending brethren? *Take heed, and beware of covetousness*---my brethren, observe, I beseech you, the double caution; *Take heed, and beware of covetousness.*---*For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*; that is, as it might well be rendered, consisteth not in a superfluity, *περισσὴν* --- of substance. Superfluities are no way necessary either to health or happiness; but have been often pernicious to both; and wise men agree, that they are as little necessary to the life and health of a state as of a single man; and have as often been equally pernicious to both.

Possibly,

Possibly, if *Henry the Fourth of France*, the most generous and public-spirited prince (if not the wisest) that ever swayed that scepter, had lived to see his own scheme, for checking and moderating the ambition of princes, take effect, by chastising them for all hostile attempts upon their neighbours, it might be found upon enquiry, that both we and our rival neighbours have already exceeded our just and reasonable boundaries, and that neither was in any degree bettered by the excess.

But I have a much higher authority to lay before you --- the example of God.

Men of meditation, who have indulged themselves in contemplating upon the affairs of the world, and the various pursuits of people and princes, are apt to be astonished, that no man or nation, that we read of (unless we except *Henry the Fourth of France*) ever set before them, or were governed by the example of Almighty God, in the settlement of his own people, his own peculiarly favoured people; whom, when he might have given them choice of all the empires of the earth, he yet chose to confine within narrow bounds, a little kingdom, much less than *Great Britain*; and yet in a few years they became the richest, the most powerful, and the most populous of any nation upon earth.

My christian hearers, one thing is clearly to be inferred from this example; that great extent of dominion is no way necessary, either to the wealth, grandeur, prosperity, or happiness of a people*; and consequently can-

* And if *David's* militia had been rightly attended to, and their sins had not alienated the Almighty from them, they might probably have continued in the height of glory to this day.

not wisely be fought after with great anxiety, at any hazard, if at all.

And this naturally leads me to consider *David's* last motive for praying, and urging his people to pray for peace, *viz.* the interest of religion and virtue.

But previous to this enquiry, give me leave to mind you, that there is another set of brethren and companions whom we should not pass by, silenced and neglected, on this occasion --- I mean those brave men who have fought the battles, and (under the blessing of God) enlarged the dominions, and encreased the glory of their country, at the expence of their blood, the hazard of their own lives, and some the loss of lives, dearest of all others to them : --- and many, to the loss of their limbs, together with the lives of their gallant companions.

My brethren, the business of the preacher is only to mind men of their duty. The king and his council will, in their wisdom, best estimate and determine upon the means of effecting it. But as the intervals of peace are the only seasons in which these brethren can have respite from their toils, and rewards for their losses and risques, I think it could not well become me to pass this duty, and the merits of these men, unnoticed upon this occasion.

The last motive mentioned by *David* for wishing and praying for peace, is the good of religion : *Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.*

It is well known, that the tumults and din of war, with a habit of carnage and cruelty, are wont to drown all the calls of humanity and religion, of mercy, piety, and pity ; to harden the heart, and deafen the ears, to all the cries
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of the widow and orphan, to all the cries of misery and distress; the groans of the dying, the agonies of the tortured, the shrieks of rapes and murders, and the outrages of despair and distraction, even against Heaven. And with the din of war, in the name of Heaven! let the din of discord cease from among us; discord, so justly described by the poets, an infernal fiend that darteth fire and serpents into the breast.

O! my brethren, remember those old and important precepts of religion and wisdom, *Fear God, and honour the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change; have no bitter envyings nor strife in your hearts, for where envyings and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work.* And although in the heat of your contests you may think it your wisdom, be assured it is *not the wisdom that descendeth from above, for that is first pure, and then peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits; therefore follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God.*

O! then, my christian hearers, when these harsh and horrid sounds, both of war and discord, are hushed and silenced, let the voice of virtue, and exhortations of piety be once more heard, and attended to as they ought. Let that national and too well grounded reproach, of *British* neglect of religion in their colonies, be at length wiped away, under a protestant and pious prince. O! my brethren, follow his example, imitate and emulate his virtues; whose heart God inspired, in the midst of glory, to remember mercy: inspired it to stop the horrors and devastations of war, which harrassed, desolated, and almost unpeopled half the christian world: and to adorn his triumphs,

not

not with the spoils of *Mars*, but the more christian and glorious ensigns of Peace.

Give me leave to conclude in the happy and delightful style of his wise, loyal, religious, and learned university of *Cambridge*, in their last most elegant and excellent address to their sovereign.

May his majesty, who is formed to be the delight and happiness of any people, be for ever possessed of the hearts of all his subjects! May that purity of manners, that undissembled piety, of which he is so illustrious an example, effectually promote and recommend the cause of virtue and true religion. May it check the progress of all open vice and profaneness; and may that God whom he so faithfully serveth, long, very long preserve him the most beloved sovereign of an united, a dutiful, and an affectionate people.



F I N I S.